

REMARKS

This Amendment is responsive to the Office Action that was mailed April 17, 2006 (hereinafter "Office Action").

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

Claims 1, 4-8, 10, 11, 13, 14, and 20-27 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Engel et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,900,159 ("Engel").

Engel discloses a method for separating liquid from a slurry. The method is described in two embodiments, each of which uses a hydrocyclone.

In the case of the embodiment that is illustrated in Fig. 1, hydrocyclone 12 is used to degas the slurry before it is pumped through a cross flow filter. Hydrocyclone 12 includes an overflow outlet in communication with line 13 for gas separated from the slurry, and an underflow outlet in communication with line 14 for directing a degassed slurry out of the hydrocyclone. Col. 8, lines 22-28. Pump 15 pumps the degassed slurry through cross flow filter 16 where it is separated into a liquid filtrate and a concentrated slurry. The concentrated slurry flowing out of cross flow filter 16 is recycled to the reactor or optionally to pump 15.

In the embodiment illustrated in Fig. 2, hydrocyclone 32 is used to separate a degassed slurry into a first stream having a low concentration of solid particles and a second stream having a high concentration of solid particles. Hydrocyclone 32 includes an overflow outlet in communication with line 33 for the first stream and an underflow outlet in communication with line 40 for the second stream. The first stream is pumped by pump 34 through a cross flow filter 35 to give a liquid filtrate and a concentrated slurry stream. Liquid filtrate flows out of cross flow filter 35 through line 36 and the concentrated slurry flows out through line 37 to be recycled to the reactor or optionally to pump 31 and/or pump 34.

Regarding claim 1 and the claims depending therefrom, there is no teaching in Engel (1) that the overflow outlet of a hydrocyclone should be connected with a products vessel and (2) that there should be means for providing fluid communication between such a products vessel and the underflow outlet of the hydrocyclone. In contrast, the present invention specifically discloses and claims a products vessel 32.

Regarding claim 13 and the claims depending therefrom, Engel (1) fails to teach the step of directing separated liquid components and gases into a products vessel and (2) fails to teach the step of providing fluid communication between such a products vessel and an underflow outlet of the hydrocyclone. In contrast, the present invention specifically discloses and claims a products vessel 32.

Because Engel fails to teach one or more of the recited elements of each of claims 1 and 13, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1, 4-8, 10, 11, 13, 14, and 20-27 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Engel is respectfully requested.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claim 12 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Engel et al. First, Engel contains no teaching or suggestion to pump a slurry through a hydrocyclone. Second, claim 12 is believed to be in condition for allowance by virtue of its dependency from claim 1.

Claims 9 and 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Engel et al. in view of Hayatdavoudi. Hayatdavoudi is not relied upon by the Office as teaching any of the elements of claims 1 and 13 that are absent in the teachings of Engel. As such, these claims are believed to be in condition for allowance by virtue of their dependency from claims 1 and 13, respectively.

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a).

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner has indicated that claims 2, 3, and 16-19 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. In the event the above arguments are not successful to overcome the rejections, Applicants will rewrite claims 2, 3, and 16-19 in independent form. Applicants extend their gratitude to the Examiner for identifying the allowable subject matter.

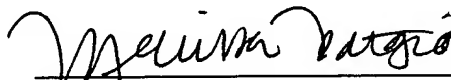
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All of the stated grounds of objection and rejection are believed to have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn. Applicants believe that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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